GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:852
ANSWERED ON:06.12.2004
DWINDLING POPULATION OF VULTURES
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether endangered vultures are choking on red tape as reported in the `Times of India` dated September 8, 2004;

(b) if so, whether saving of vulture in the country is hanging fire between various ministries;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether vulture population has fallen by 95 percent since 1990; and

(e) if so, the corrective measures so far taken or to be taken by the Government to save the vultures ?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) to (c) Populations of three out of nine species of vultures in India have been reported to be adversely affected due to the consumption of livestock carcasses treated with diclofenac. A multi-pronged strategy has been adopted to protect the species. This includes phasing out veterinary diclofenac and replacing it with an effective substitute that does not have deleterious effect on vulture or other wild species. The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying has advised that residual effect of substitute drugs needs to be studied before they are introduced.

(d) A survey conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society under a special project sponsored in the year 2000 by the Ministry of Environment & Forests revealed that there has been more than 90 percent decline in the populations of three species of vultures viz, White Backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed in many parts of the country. Post mortem and diagnostic tests revealed that this drastic decline was due to consumption of the veterinary drug diclofenac by the vultures who fed on carcasses of livestock. Diclofenac causes deposition of uric acid in the visceral organs leading to sudden death.

(e) The corrective measures so far taken or to be taken by the Government to save vultures are as follows:

(i) Protection status of White backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed Vultures has been upgraded from Schedule IV to Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

(ii) Two workshops were organized in New Delhi in September 2000 and April, 2004 to work out a comprehensive strategy for conservation of vultures in consultation with scientists.

(iii) The State Governments have been advised to draw a comprehensive action plan for effective conservation of vultures.

(iv) Bombay Natural History Society in collaboration with the Haryana State Forest Department has taken up a project on conservation of vultures. A `Vulture Captive Care facility` has been established at Panchkula.

(v) The Ministry of Health has been requested to replace the use of the drug diclofenac with suitable alternative drugs.

(vi) As reported by the Government of Uttaranchal, a provisional vulture care centre has started functioning in the premises of Vetrinary Hospital, Roorkee.

(vii) The Government of Uttaranchal has directed all Chief Veterinary Officers to orient the veterinarians to reduce the use of diclofenac.

(viii) The State of Uttaranchal has also requested the drug Controller to impose ban on the use of diclofenac.

(ix) The Government of Gujarat has requested the Indian Drug Manufacturers Association to replace diclofenac with suitable alternatives.

(x) The State Governments have been requested to set up vulture care centres for the conservation of three species of vultures.